

It's early — but here's some gift suggestions

AFTER 10 years of retail experience, I can safely say "I haven't the slightest idea of what's going on." Retail changes every year. As soon as you think you have it figured out, it completely flips-flops.

I remember when there was "Back-to-School" then "Halloween," then down the road came "Thanksgiving" and finally the "Christmas season." This year people are already asking "Where are those Christmas art kits you guys make up?" And I'm standing there thinking "Christmas? I haven't even taken in the garden hose and there is still a pumpkin on my porch, and this lady wants a Christmas art kit?"

Is it me? What happened to Thanksgiving? I'm still griping about the hot summer we had, and some people are getting ready for Christmas. Well, believe it or not, it's true. So I am writing my buyer's guide article a little early . . . no, make that a lot early.

Here's a good example. A lady called my store and said, "I want to buy my grandson an easel for Christmas, and I can't find what I want." "How old is your grandson?" I asked. "Fourteen," she replied. "Did he ask for an easel?" I asked with doubtful tones. "No," she said. "But he likes art, I figured he'd want one."

I POLITELY TOLD her that her grandson would probably kiss her, say "Wow, grandma, I love it," and then never use it.

Free-standing easels are best for painters and pastel painters. Teens are usually more into drawing media. For example: pencil, colored pencil, charcoal pencil, pen and ink etc. For drawing media, it is best to work slightly elevated at a desk, drafting table or even a lap board. There is a little-known accessory called a board elevator that will hold a lap board or even a piece of masonite at any angle. This will transform the kitchen table or a bedroom desk into a beautiful drawing surface.

Painters, some pastel artists and all air-brush people need easels. Free-standing easels are needed for larger works of art, and many artists are just as happy with table easels. The thing about art materials is that they get used up and artists are usually frugal.

Often grumbling, an artist will lay three tubes of paint at the register and say something like "I need these three colors but someday I'm going to get that \$3 tube of Naples Yellow over there." But seriously, I guess I'm that way myself. It's hard with the everyday expenses of life to go into an art supply store and get what-

ever suits your fancy. That is precisely why artists' loved ones appreciate a gift of art materials.

PAINTERS NEED paint, they also need brushes. If they have enough brushes, buy them one really nice brush or a specialty brush. We have one brush that is \$69. Personally, I could never use that brush, I'd be afraid I would get paint on it! My favorite special oil brushes are Mongoose-Badger hair brushes, monkey hair and sable. My favorite watercolor brushes are black squirrel hair pointed more, oval wash brushes, mongoose hair flat wash, most pointed sables and script liner brushes.

All oil and acrylic painters need canvas to paint on. All watercolor painters need paper. Sounds easy but it can get complicated. The best thing to do is ask for help wherever you shop. If the store people just point to a shelf, you're like-



artifacts
David Messing

If you plan to draw your own Christmas cards this year, start thinking about what you want to draw, and my next article will tell you how to draw them and approximately what will be the cost of printing.

Dave Messing has been an art teacher in the area for more than 10 years. He is also the owner of the Art Store & More in Livonia.

ly to buy the wrong thing. Ask what they recommend and have an idea of what you would like to spend.

If you get totally frustrated there are always gift certificates. I still think it's too early for Christmas shopping. But not too early for Christmas gift-thinking and questioning. There are many new materials I would like to introduce to you but I will wait another week or two.

Fresco auction

Supporters of fresco have organized an art auction and reception for Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Pope Dimitroff Sunday, in West Bloomfield.

Twenty-five area artists have donated works to be auctioned, and two local fresco artists will show slides on the technique.

Fresco is the art of grinding then applying earth colors on wet, lime plaster so the mural fuses with the wall surface to become permanent.

Bloch and Dimitroff met while working with Rivera. The daughter of composer Ernest Bloch, Lucienne took the only pictures believed to exist of Rivera's murals at Rockefeller Center in New York, which were later destroyed.

Dimitroff joined Rivera as an assistant during the Detroit project.

For more information on the reception and auction, contact Jeanne Poulet, 464-6614.



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